

Board of Management Performance & Nominations Committee

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| Date of Meeting | Monday 24 January 2022 |
| Paper No. | PNC3-E |
| Agenda Item | 4.4.2 |
| Subject of Paper | Learning and Teaching Scenarios |
| FOISA Status | Disclosable |
| Primary Contact | Dr Claire Carney |
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| Action | For Discussion |

1. Recommendations

- 1.1 The Committee is asked to consider and discuss the scenarios presented for Learning and Teaching delivery for remainder of academic year 21/22.

2. Purpose of Paper

- 2.1 The purpose of this paper is to facilitate discussion on the College's Learning and Teaching delivery model for the remainder of the academic year in the context of the coronavirus pandemic.

3. Key Insights

- 3.1 The College agreed to the delivery of a Blended Learning delivery model for academic year 20/21 and subsequently for 21/22 in June 2020. Whilst Covid was the key factor in that decision the College had already set out the ambition to increase online delivery and provide more of a blended offer. A number of options/scenarios were offered and included:

Option 1. Fully Online for Academic Year 20/21

Option 2. Fully Online: Sept to Dec 2020, followed by Blended (on campus and online) Delivery.

Option 3. Blended Delivery for academic year 20/21: Limited numbers allowed in college and course delivered online and on-campus.

- 3.2 All options were 'new' for the college and as such had complex implications for students, staff, recruitment and curriculum delivery. Following consultation across the College there was general agreement that the Blended approach was the most practical and accessible option available, Therefore, and consistent with the Scottish Government's guidance, it was agreed that Option 3, the blended learning and teaching delivery model was the preferred option.
- 3.3 A tangible and realised benefit of offering a blended model is the enhanced flexibility it offers where it allows the College to go fully online (when further spikes have occurred and will occur) or increased return to campus as we have moved through the different covid phases. We are mindful of the First Ministers statement (5 January 22) where she said that '*Omicron is unlikely to be last new variant*', therefore, we will continue to adapt and become increasingly resilient in the future as our new Blended model matures.
- 3.4 The college has been through a number of covid phases and the Learning and Teaching Committee has been provided with detailed academic planning arrangements for 21/22 in Sept 2021. Subsequently, a further update and review of progress was delivered in November 2021. The purpose of the guidance (for staff) was not to be prescriptive, but to provide broad parameters around which curriculum teams can work/adjust according to local and disciplinary differences. We aimed to provide a workable model for the longer term that takes account of the positive aspects of online learning and the pedagogical shift proposed through the Student Academic Experience Strategy. However, as the last 22 months has taught us, the ability to provide absolute certainty in a very complex, turbulent and ever-changing environment is difficult and the continued need to be flexible will be an ongoing feature for the foreseeable future.
- 3.5 With regards to covid restrictions, when reporting to the Nov 2021 Board LTC, we were operating at a 'beyond 0' level and whilst many of the restrictions have been lifted across society, certain restrictions remain within colleges and we will continue to adapt and change as guidance is delivered.
- 3.6 Since that time, we have seen the emergence of the Omicron variant and the College took the decision to move majority of learning back online from Monday 20 December with only critical delivery of practical learning and teaching and key staff on campus for the last teaching week of 2021. This would continue from 10 January 2022 and be

reviewed every two weeks. It is anticipated that once the 'spike' is over onsite delivery will increase.

- 3.7 Deciding on the criticality of courses was quick and efficient following the outcomes from the Covid Learning and Teaching Task Group established by the VPSE with representation from across Faculties, Student Experience Directorate, Performance, HR and the Student Association. The aim was to consider separate scenarios that capture different durations of lockdown and potential impact on likely number of days available for practical delivery of classes and assessment. It identified a set of principles for prioritisation of students, e.g. to complete certification and safety critical provision, maximising delivery (within restrictions) and likely costs of these and implications for learner progression. The levels of criticality identified included:

Level 1 They require to complete the course immediately as they are in their final phase or year; non completion will result in no professional qualification or articulation.

Level 2 This course can have a short-term deferral (e.g. addressed in summer).

Level 3 Can be deferred to subsequent college phase or Academic Year.

Level 4 Can be cancelled but there will be commercial implications.

- 3.8 It is clear that Education is a priority for SG and minimising disruption as much as possible is a key aim, particularly so to avoid a full lockdown and closure like that experienced last academic year. There is a certain confidence, that we will meet the realistic scenario as outlined below.

| Optimistic Assumptions | Realistic Assumptions | Pessimistic Assumptions |
|--|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Campuses open • no physical distancing • Full classes with blended delivery • Increased student Satisfaction • Holistic Assessment | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Campuses open • 1m physical distancing • limited student numbers on site • Increased number of withdrawals • Some extending, deferring and repeat students • Local covid outbreaks • Increased Staff and student absences • Ongoing impact on student and staff wellbeing • Retain 20/21 Student Satisfaction • Changing Timetables • Holistic Assessment but pressures on practical assessment – dependant on flexibility of regulatory body | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Full Lockdown • Closure of College Campuses. • No onsite delivery • High number of withdrawals • High number of extending deferring and repeat students • Ongoing and increased impact on student and staff wellbeing • Reduced Student Satisfaction • Changing Timetables • Holistic Assessment but pressures on practical assessment- – dependant on flexibility of regulatory body |

Key Developments and Review

- 3.9 Given strategic direction through our Student Academic Experience Strategy (*Active, Blended and Connected*) coupled with the realistic assumption identified above we have taken a developmental and learned approach where we have reviewed and surveyed our staff students to assess impact and development points.
- 3.10 The most recent evidence provided by the Student Experience Survey is very positive and demonstrates an increased overall satisfaction for the College to 91%, an increase of 2.7% from the previous session. Overall satisfaction for Learning and Teaching also increased to 88.7% an increase of 3.9% from last year. Impressively and indicative of the role of the library over this period, students showed increased satisfaction with library resources available including provision of learning spaces an increase of 7.3% to 89%. This is a remarkable achievement given the turbulent times experienced but is indicative of the maturing of approach and the investments made in online development and delivery.
- 3.11 What is evident from the Student Engagement Survey and review work conducted over last academic year is that students like the flexibility and inclusive nature of the blended model. However, and as expected, there are areas that require development and much of this has been identified and actioned across Faculties and Directorates. At a strategic level, the College has introduced certain longer-term mitigations to enhance the quality of online delivery and student support. Some of these outcomes are already delivering results and the following sections highlight key updates on some of these:
- **Blended Learning Fund:** The committee will be aware of the fund developed last academic year to support the development and enhancement of online learning, teaching and assessment resources. The majority of projects are now complete (with the exception of a small number with agreed longer time frames. The fund was very well received and has demonstrated real impact in L&T delivery. A new Fund for 21/22 was recently announced and applications are currently being processed. In discussions with Finance, it is proposed to build such a fund into annual finance budgets, so it becomes part of the fabric of the college functions in support and developing curricular offer and delivery.
 - **Learning Spaces:** In order to allow increased onsite teaching and facilitate streaming of classes, the College has enhanced 90 general teaching rooms to including cameras and desktops in rooms. At the very least this will allow 'live' streaming of classes where some disciplines may find this of benefit to students but also allow recording of instructional videos for asynchronous delivery. In addition, Deans have worked with their teams and Estates on how best to re-purpose practical spaces to enhance learning and make use of potential curriculum development opportunities. This will continue to be a key area of activity for the foreseeable future. There are many space options available in the college and the VPSE will work with Estates and a small group of Associate Deans to develop more of these for it to be a feature of the Colleges approach to Learning and Teaching.

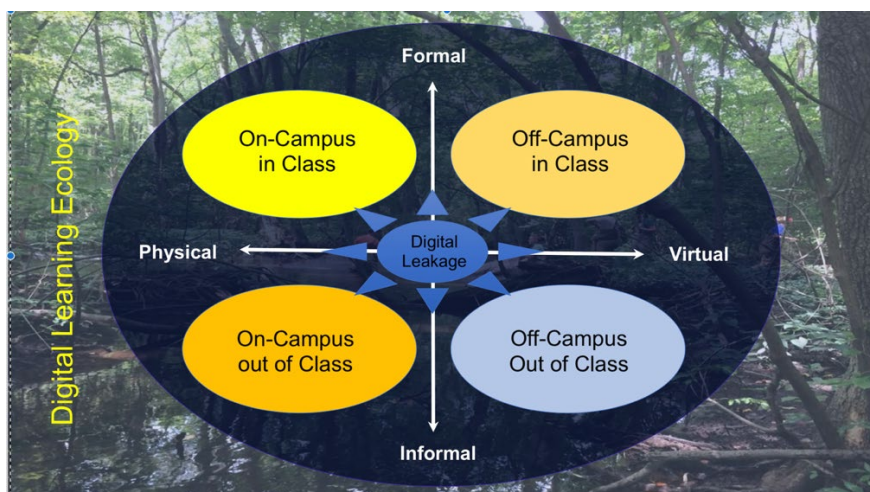


Figure 1. Learning Environments

- Digital Access and Student Connectivity:** A continued priority for the College is ensuring that all learners have access to hardware they can use to access learning. Last year, the College invested almost £1.3m on a laptop loan scheme, purchasing 2000 laptops. The College will continue the laptop scheme again this academic year and have already issued 1,695 laptops to support blended learning AY 21/22 An additional 1,000 Google Chromebooks have been purchased AY 21/22 (in addition to the 457 issued in AY 20/21), from which 250 have been issued to ESOL students to date, with more scheduled over the coming weeks.
- Virtual Learning Environment (VLE) –** Canvas, our new VLE is being rolled out across the college with College staff working through ‘Growing with Canvas’, five modules of content that takes users through everything they need to know about using Canvas at City of Glasgow College. In addition, there is a weekly programme of webinar training sessions to support adoption. Each Faculty has newly appointed Faculty Digital Champions (1 lecturer and 1 curriculum Head) who are timetabled one per day per week to support the Faculty Canvas roll out. Digital Champions are currently building their own skills to support the roll out.
- Staff Support for Digital Delivery:** The Learning and Teaching Academy continue to provide a comprehensive range of developmental activities and resources to support individual staff and curriculum teams. A schedule of activity is available and promoted on the intranet and [relevant webpages](#).
- Student Experience and Retention.** In certain curricular areas and at lower SCQF levels it is challenging to retain students. As has been reported throughout Covid, students at lower SCQF levels have struggled with the nature of online and independent learning coupled with reduced practical ‘hands-on’ learning, this is now exacerbated by increased job opportunities particularly in hospitality and construction areas offering increased hourly rates which inevitably entice students away from college. In addition, there are further and deeper mental health issues presenting to our student services. The College has been in receipt of mental health funding this academic year and we are in the process of developing a college wide approach (staff and students) to mental health and wellbeing, where we take cognisance of the various impact stressors (e.g. assessment) and not limit approaches to dealing with consequences of mental health and wellbeing issues. A toolkit on embedding mental health in the Curriculum is being developed for staff and the Student Experience Directorate organised a Mental Health Conference on 1 December 2021 and outcomes of the project will be delivered over the course of the next few months.

- **Student Communications Framework:** A key learning point from Covid is the importance of clear and regular communication with students. The VPSE has worked with the Student Experience Directorate, City SA and the Communications Directorate to develop a sustainable Communications Framework with a clear process for developing and delivering communications to the student body. Further work is being developed and led by CitySA and Communications in the provision of communications training and a resource guide for Faculty and lecturing staff to highlight key aspects of communication principles for example, inclusivity, consistency, approach, tone, method and timing.
- **Equality Impact Assessment (EQIA) for Blended Learning Model:** In recognition of the accessibility and inclusivity associated with online learning the College completed an Equality Impact Assessment. This was a significant piece of work and has highlighted where significant progress has been made and where development is still required. The EQIA is a key step in the maturity of our approach with some key actions already being progressed (Lecture recording) and others will be addressed as Canvas (our new VLE) is fully implemented.

4 **Impact and Implications**

- 4.1 Covid restrictions will continue to impact on learning, teaching, assessment and student support services for the foreseeable future. The impact of physical distancing will limit numbers of students for on-site activities.
- 4.2 There will be implications for our physical and digital learning spaces requiring space planning and investment to create a more sustainable and effective environment.
- 4.3 Continued investment in staff development and supporting student digital skills to navigate and progress in this new environment is imperative and will form part of plans for the coming year.
- 4.4 Staff and student absences will impact on delivery and attainment.